

MISSION @ FIRST

Each month we are highlighting one mission project of First Presbyterian Church on the front page of PresbyNews. This month: **Christmas Baskets**.

What is the Christmas Basket Program?

For decades, FPC has been delivering Christmas Baskets. We are always refining the baskets to meet new needs and challenges. We deliver these baskets to families who may not otherwise afford Christmas gifts, along with food for the family.

What does the Basket consist of?

This year each basket will include a Kroger Voucher for at least \$50 (adjusted for family size), Christmas presents provided by church members, a tin of holiday popcorn, and a copy of the New Testament.

Can I help?

Of course! Call the church office for more information.

This sermon excerpt from Pastor Michael about the Christmas Basket Program is from December 17, 2017.

My family and I came by the church bright and early yesterday, picked up the food, and delivered our Christmas basket. Each year, we provide Christmas gifts and food for families through the generosity of this congregation.

After delivering our basket, we stopped by Frisch's for breakfast. In the first booth by the door sat another couple from the church. When I had seen them 40 minutes earlier, they were a little groggy, but now they were elated. They had these big, wicked smiles. It was clear that delivering the Christmas basket had stirred the joy that was deep within them. It radiated from the greasy booth. I asked, "Why do you think it brought you so much joy?"

Well, of course, in their giving they had also received a gift. The mother of the family was demonstratively appreciative and gave them big hugs. But digging a little deeper. I learned it brought them joy for totally different reasons.



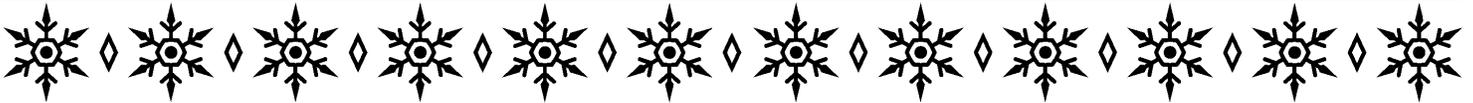
The wife of the couple grew up receiving more than she ever even wanted every Christmas. The abundance of Christmas was almost ridiculous. She appreciated that and could not imagine Christmas without that sort of abundance. It brought her immense *joy* to dutifully share the generosity that she experienced as a child.

However, Christmas was often a little thin for the husband as a child. It turns out that he was often the recipient of other people's generosity during the season. On at least one Christmas, someone adopted his family for Christmas. He received gifts because of the kindness of others. It brought him immense *joy* to pass that kindness along.

Saturday morning stirred *joy* in each of them for entirely different reasons. Joy wasn't limited to any set of circumstances. The Christmas Baskets meant something different to each of them, and it still precipitated *joy*. In each case, we see, as Karl Barth once quipped, that joy is the simplest form of gratitude.

December is a stressful time of year. There's Advent and Christmas. There are families and obligations. There are shopping sales and end of year expenses. In the midst of the busyness, it is easy to lose track of who we are and to whom we belong. And there is a lingering need that often follows many of us around: We feel like we need to impress. The church staff feels this way as we plan services. Hosts feel this way as they prepare the Christmas ham. Parents feel this way as they purchase gifts for children. This year I invite you to let go of the need to impress. Instead work on being present by inviting and welcoming others—to your church, into your home, or into your lives. People will remember your welcome much longer than your impression. They may even be changed by it. After all, that is the practice of incarnation that supposedly marks this whole season of the year.

Grace and peace,
Michael



OUR THIRTEENTH YEAR OF SHALOM BEGINS JANUARY 20

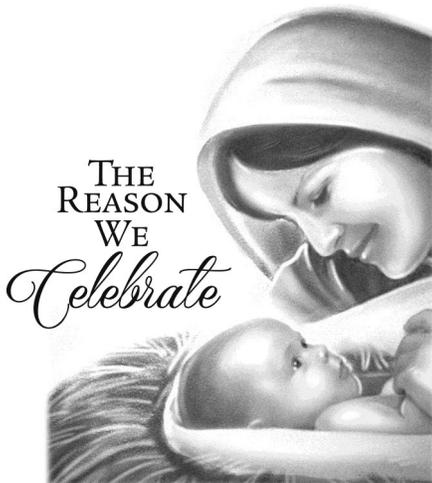
We asked to host the homeless for the coldest week of the winter, and SHALOM has gladly assigned us the third week of January. Fellowship Hall is warm, our food is the best, and we know what we are doing.

Christian Enterprise Baptist Church will again co-host with us. They did an excellent job last year and were a fun bunch to be around.

FPC has four days of responsibility...breakfast, dinner, and fellowship. I will need your help filling our responsibilities. We need volunteers to prepare and serve breakfast and dinner, members to engage with our guests in the evening, and men willing to stay overnight.

Please contact me if you would like to participate in this mission. Thank you in advance for your help.

Darrell Templeton
937-222-4351



**Merry Christmas and a
Happy New Year from**
Michael Joyce Lisa Kathy
Sandy Corbit Cheryl Lara
Janet Paula Kim

Christian Education and Faith Formation

Adult Ministries

Sunday Night Live will continue studying “The Spiritual Brain, a Science and Religious Experience” with Dr. Andrew Newberg of the Center for Integrative Medicine at the Thomas Jefferson University Hospital.

SNL is held Sunday nights at 7:00 at the home of Paula and Jay Cohen. All are welcome to come. For more information, call Paula at 423-4443. On December 16 we will have our annual Christmas party at 6:00 p.m. at the home of Paula and Jay, we will then take a holiday break and return on January 6.

Tuesday Morning Bible Study meets at 10:00 a.m. in the Youth Room. We will start Mark 1 on December 4.



Children's Ministries

Children are always welcome in worship! Wiggle bags are available at each Sanctuary entrance to help children feel included and engaged during the worship service. Additional resources for parents and guardians are also available - look for the pinwheel and enjoy!

A loving, Christian environment is provided year-round from 9:45 a.m. - 11:15 a.m. for infants and children up to 5 years old. This month, Sunday School (children ages 6-12) meets following Circle Time, in the Godly Play Room on December 9. Children will be dismissed in the Gathering Area following worship.

Youth Ministry

Youth Group will participate in the Middletown Youth Connection December 9, from 3:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. Middle School and High School students are invited to meet at The Gathering, located at 31 South Clinton Street in Middletown. This month, we'll fill stockings to give to Middletown residents living in extreme poverty.

Would you like to receive updates and reminders about Youth Group via text or email? Contact the church office to learn how you can be added to the contact list.

Log College Project

The Log College Project is an innovative initiative at Princeton Theological Seminary to help Christian congregations design, test, and implement new models of youth ministry. Selected as one of twelve congregations to participate in the Community of Practice, we will receive a \$15,000 grant to build new forms of ministry that take theology and young people seriously.

This month, the Design Team will meet in the Youth Room following worship on December 9 and 16. A few of our current project activities include walking the neighborhood and making observations, playing a game to practice the steps of design thinking, and learning about empathy. Design Team Meetings are open to the congregation; join us and contribute to the process!



Draw Near Advent Devotional

This Advent, let us draw near to the One who leans down to earth to beckon us closer. Printed daily devotionals are available for you to pick up in the Gathering Area and the Church office. Following the lectionary scripture texts, you are invited to draw, read, reflect, pray, and color your way through the end of 2018. This is a great resource for older youth and adults, but parents could also invite children to help them color and embody the weekly active prompts. May this devotional be your guide as you respond to God's invitation to draw near.

Advent Workshop

All ages are welcome Saturday, December 8, from 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. for an afternoon of Christmas fun! Make your own nativity, hear the Christmas story, and enjoy festive goodies and hot chocolate! Contact the church office to sign up.

Music Notes

*Christmas! The season of joy!
And what better way to express joy than through singing!
Nothing warms our hearts more than the
familiar carols and songs of the season.
Some describe the beauty of a sparkling winter night;
of snow, tinsel, and twinkling lights
or the warmth of friendship and love.
But the real joy of the season is in celebrating the birth of a child;
a birth foretold by prophets-one who would come from heaven
and bring salvation to a broken world.
We sing of love and hope and peace and especially—joy.*

(From “Sing Christmas” by Mary McDonald)

It is not possible to say **THANK YOU** enough to all of the people who created such a **FABULOUS AND FUN** evening for the Ninth Annual Organ Concert!! There were so many gifts given of time, talent, and financial resources from musicians, chefs, kitchen elves, organ movers, church staff, and audience. What a privilege to serve such a wonderful Christian community. May God bless each of you! Please see below the results of your generosity. (CD’s of the Organ Concert are available upon request.)

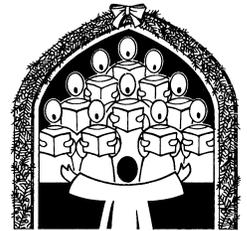
Organ Support Fund Net Total	\$2,456.73
Choralfest 2019	\$300.00
Evening’s Enjoyment	Priceless

Looking forward to an inspiring December:

Sing Christmas—Christmas Cantata

Composers Joel Raney and Mary McDonald have joined together to create an exuberant and dynamic cantata that is certain to delight and inspire you. The narration knits the music together in a thrilling and complete re-telling of the Christmas story.

“***Sing Christmas***” will be presented on **Sunday, December 16**, by the Sanctuary Choir, soloists, chamber orchestra, and sacred dancers from *The Academy of Dance Arts* with choreographers Melanie Malicote and Danita Scoggins. *Be sure to mark your calendars to be part of this inspiring morning.*



Christmas Cantata

Christmas Around the World---Children’s Christmas Musical

Join the voices of *Joyful Noize* as these young “reporters” travel the world to discover how children in various countries learn and sing about Jesus’ birth.

The true message of Christmas, as told in this delightful way, will be delivered by the voices of the *Joyful Noize Choir* in Fellowship Hall on **Sunday, December 23**, at 4:00 p.m. Please join us for this inspiring Family Worship Service.

The Music Ministry Staff of First Presbyterian Church pray that the music of the Christmas season will be a wonderful blessing, will lift you up, and bring you joy!!

*In Christ’s name,
Joyce Zigler, Lara Moon, Janet Scott*

December Birthdays!

01.....Linette Curless	29.....Carol Burns
01.....Brody Nein	29.....Greg Gerber
03.....Jim Bruner	29.....Linda Heagen
07.....David Banker	29.....Eldon Mattick
07.....Loren Curless	
08.....Dave Francis	
12.....Jo Flowers	
12.....Tony Lyons	
16.....Gregg Clark	
17.....Lou Christy	
17.....Kimberli Steele	
19.....Tina Newlin	
19.....Joan Rice	
21.....Richie Dempster	
22.....Bob Selby	
23.....Barb Landis	
26.....Sharon Dowden	
27.....Jeff Moore	
28.....Dolly Howard	
28.....Allyson Irving	



Men's Monthly Meeting

The Men's Monthly Meeting is an opportunity to get together and socialize over a meal outside the church. You're welcome to join them on **Tuesday, December 11**, at the Clubhouse Sports Grille, 250 N. Main Street in Monroe @ 5:30 p.m.



Ladies Night Out!

ATTENTION: ALL CHURCH GALS AND FRIENDS!



You are invited to a fun and casual evening at The Spinning Fork, 2220 N. Verity Pkwy on **Tuesday, December 18**, at 6:30 p.m.

Weather Policy

If the Middletown City Schools are closed due to weather, the church office will be closed, and events will be cancelled. If you have a pastoral emergency, email Michael, michael@fpcmiddletown.com.



Beginning January 2, the office hours will be:

Monday—Thursday 9-4 p.m.
Friday—9:00-12:00 p.m.

Stewardship Update

Following Dedication Sunday, we have many positive signs for our Stewardship Campaign. The first positive sign is that are four new commitments for 2019! Secondly, 27 families or individuals have decided to increase their estimated giving for the year. We continue to receive commitments, and are still waiting to hear back from about 55 individuals or families. If your estimated giving card is still sitting on your desk, please complete it and return it to the office as soon as possible, or drop it in Sunday's offering plate. We hope to finalize our 2019 budget by mid-December.

CHRISTMAS JOY!

With Christ at the center this holiday season, we can follow in his example of servant leadership by serving our brothers and sisters in faith.

Funds from the Christmas Joy Offering help the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions provide critical financial assistance to eligible workers in the PC(USA) and their families, and to qualifying retired church workers and their families. The Christmas Joy Offering also supports the education and development of our future leaders at Presbyterian-related racial ethnic schools and colleges. These schools are dedicated to creating opportunities and environments for racial ethnic students built on a foundation of Christian values.

By giving to the Christmas Joy Offering, we can share in the hope of Christ and celebrate his leadership by providing support to our church workers, racial ethnic young people, and their families.

We will collect the Christmas Joy offering on December 16 and 23.

2018 Pledges & Contributions

Contributions for the 2018 fiscal year must be *post-marked* no later than **Monday, 12/31**, or received in the office by **Friday, 12/28**. Contributions brought into the office or postmarked in 2019 will be credited to your account for 2019 (no matter the date on the check). Statements for 2018 will be mailed mid- to late January.

2019 Offering Envelopes are available in the Gathering Area. We offer pre-packaged sets in packs of 52 (weekly) or 12 (monthly).

If you have any questions regarding your pledge or giving history, please call Kathy Harris at the church office.

Hospice of Middletown invites you to **Seasons to Remember**, their holiday service for people in bereavement on **Saturday, December 8, at 7:00 p.m.** The service is at the Woodside Cemetery & Arboretum. Pastor Michael will be offering the reflection. Be sure to come early and enjoy the radiant luminaries that will light the way to the chapel. Following the service, refreshments will be served in the community room



A very special Christmas remembrance. . .

Christmas trees adorned with beautiful ornaments create some of our most special Christmas memories. The Music/Worship Ministry Team invites you to join us once again to create a *Memorial Christmas Tree* in the Gathering Area. This year our tree will be aglow with many *Multi Color 3-inch Stained Glass Stars*.

May one or more of these lovely *Stained Glass Stars* find a home on your tree or as a sun catcher in your window. These beautiful stars can also be a gift for that special person. The *Multi Color Stained Glass Star* will be on display in the Gathering Area and the church office.

You have the opportunity to purchase a *Multi Color Stained Glass Star* in honor or in memory of a loved one. After the Christmas season, you may take your lovely ornament home to adorn your tree next year. You may also purchase extra ornaments as beautiful gifts. Just fill out the form below

Christmas Multi Color Stained Glass Star Ornament

I will purchase _____ *Multi Color Stained Glass Star (s)* for the Memorial Christmas Tree.

In honor/memory of _____

(Circle your choice.)

(Please print information exactly as you would like it listed.)

Given by _____

(Please print information exactly as you would like it listed.)

Phone _____

Payment Enclosed _____

Please detach this section and place it in the offering plate on Sunday, or send/bring it to the church office by **Sunday, December 9.**

Our Mission

...to **SHARE** the good news

...to **NURTURE** the Spirit

...to **SERVE** members and neighbors

December Worship Services

Sunday, December 2

First Sunday of Advent

Communion

Luke 21:25-36

Music by the Sanctuary Choir

Saturday, December 8

Seasons to Remember

7:00 p.m.

Chapel at Woodside Cemetery

Sunday, December 9

Second Sunday of Advent

Luke 3:1-18

Music by the Sanctuary Choir

Joyful Noize

Tuesday, December 11

Christmas Tea

Mount Pleasant

2:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 16

Third Sunday of Advent

“Sing Christmas” by Joel Raney & Mary McDonald

This beautiful cantata will be presented by the Sanctuary Choir, Soloists, Chamber Orchestra, Liturgical Dancers and Narrators

Sunday, December 23

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Luke 1:39-55

Music by the Renaissance Ringers

Lara Moon, soloist

Sunday, December 23

Family Christmas Service

4:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall

“Christmas Around the World”

Joyful Noize Children’s Choir

Monday, December 24

Christmas Eve

6:30 p.m. Recital of Music

7:00 p.m. Candlelight Service

Music presented by Sanctuary Choir,

Renaissance Ringers, and Soloists

Sunday, December 30

Luke 2:41-52

Music by Tara Downie, soloist

Susan Beagle, pianist

Michael Isaacs, Pastor/Head of Staff
Joyce Zigler, Director of Music
Lisa Kaufer, Director of Faith Formation
Kathy Harris, Administrative Assistant
Corbit Harrison, Facility Manager
Sandy Fisher, Secretary
Cheryl Jarbo, Custodian
Lara Moon, Director of Children Choirs
Janet Scott, Director of Handbells
Paula Elliott, Dir. of Kindergarten Readiness
Kim Flesher, Pre-K Teacher

Office hours for **December**

Monday—Thursday 9:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.

Friday—9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

Office hours beginning **January 2**

Monday—Thursday 9 a.m.—4:00 p.m.

Friday—9:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.

Website: www.fpcmiddletown.com

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